



NMED's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

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New Mexico Demands Greater Scientific Integrity and Regulatory Honesty from EPA

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New Mexico Irrigation Ditches Were Not Closed as EPA Claims

Santa Fe – Yesterday, the New Mexico Environment Department provided [official comments](#) to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency calling for greater scientific integrity and regulatory honesty as the proposed Superfund process moves forward to include the site of the Gold King Mine Spill (Bonita Peak Mining District) on the National Priorities List.

According to New Mexico's official comments, "In its response to the Gold King Mine (GKM) blowout, EPA has failed to monitor and test critical environmental media, selectively 'cherry picked' data to downplay the seriousness of the spill, misrepresented facts about the release, and made unsubstantiated conclusions and assertions. ... NMED therefore makes the following comments and demands to ensure that the Superfund process for the BPMD Site adequately protects public health, safety, welfare, water quality and the environment for downstream communities within the State of New Mexico."

Despite the fact that some New Mexico irrigation ditches were not closed during the Gold King Mine Spill and allowed tainted water through to agricultural fields, EPA continues to claim publically that:

"We are certain that crops are safe for consumption. When the plume came through, irrigation ditches that impacted crops and livestock were shut down."

<https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/frequent-questions-related-gold-king-mine-response>

New Mexico Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn said, "As the state's environmental regulator relying upon scientific integrity and regulatory honesty to do our job of protecting water quality and the environment, we demand that EPA stop lying to the public. It erodes public trust in government and is, in all ways and at all levels, wrong."

EPA also set a false safety standard for lead contamination in New Mexico soils, determining a weaker recreational level for clearly residential areas on the Animas River in New Mexico.

"Citizens here feel highly disrespected," said Susan Palko-Schraa, a member of New Mexico's Gold King Mine Citizens Advisory Committee and a riverside resident.

When questioned about their false safety standard for lead at their public Superfund meeting in Farmington on Thursday, EPA declined to respond, then sent out [publicity yesterday](#) completely disregarding the safety of those New Mexicans who reside on the Animas River. Yesterday's EPA news release states only that EPA's tests meet recreational screening levels, yet remains silent on the issue of residential safety.

"EPA's...use of skewed baselines brings EPA's supervision and judgment into question," according

to the New Mexico Environment Department's official comments transmitted to EPA yesterday.

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Cutline Cedar Hills Photo: Although the Animas River fosters many recreational activities; when it arrives in New Mexico it borders agricultural and residential lands. Residences at Cedar Hills, New Mexico on the Animas River pictured here. *Courtesy of S. Palko-Schraa.*



Cutline Ditch Photo: The Willet Irrigation Ditch in Farmington, New Mexico received the full force of the Gold King Mine spill's toxic water on August 8, 2015, when gates failed to close. The U.S. EPA claims all ditches were closed and no agricultural effects occurred. EPA also denied a funding request to repair or replace broken ditch gates, made by another ditch owner. *Courtesy of NMED.*



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